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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 001388

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [PINR](#) [PGOV](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: FSB OPERATION IN STAVROPOL DISTRICT: ANOTHER
ETHNIC GROUP PRODUCES EXTREMISTS

Classified By: Acting PolMinCouns Bruce Donahue. Reason 1.4 (b, d)

¶1. (U) Press February 13-14 reported an FSB operation against an "extremist Islamist" cell in the town of Tukuy-Mekteb, in Russia's Stavropol Kray. Tukuy-Mekteb lies along a regional road about 15 km west of the Dagestani Border and 45 km north of the border with Chechnya. Initial reports said twelve extremists and a smaller number of security forces were killed. "Kommersant" reported February 14, however, that only eight bodies of extremists have been found so far.

¶2. (U) About 50-60,000 ethnic Nogays live in Russia, remnants of the once-great Nogay Horde of the Mongol Khans. They are divided among Stavropol Kray, Dagestan (the part of Dagestan closest to Tukuy-Mekteb is called the "Nogay Steppe") and Chechnya. Of the 10,000 Nogays who inhabited Chechnya before 1994, about half remain there. The rest moved to Dagestan or Stavropol to escape the fighting.

¶3. (U) The Stavropol Kray Prosecutor has identified seven of the eight bodies, according to "Kommersant." Five were from Tukuy-Mekteb itself, although a relative of one was implicated in a suicide truck bombing in Grozny in 2003. The other two were identified as native to Chechnya.

¶4. (C) A GOR source clarified that all cell members were Nogays. It is unclear whether the natives of Chechnya were still living there or were among those who had moved in the 1990s. The source asserted that the group members appear to have received training in Chechnya and were well-armed.

¶5. (C) Comment: The operation highlights the spread of armed, anti-Russian religious extremists to new sets of ethnic groups in the North Caucasus. It is difficult to generalize about the political views of the complex Caucasian clans and sub-clans, with their internal rivalries and feuds, and the Nogays are no exception. But it does appear that Nogays showed little or no sympathy for Dudayev's separatism during the first Chechen war (1994-96), and those in Chechnya tended to side with Federal Russian authorities. The spread of Jihadist Islam appears to have undermined that orientation.
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